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COUNTRY: Palestine REPORT NO: RPJ-246  
ORIGIN: Palestine DATE OF REPORT: 19 February 1948  
SOURCE: Jewish Agency DATE OF INFO: 15 February 1948  
SUB-SOURCE: *Arab Military Activity in Palestine*  
SUBJECT: Decline of Husayni Influence

1. Damascus Decisions Limited Mufti's Power.

"The Damascus decisions, to which the Mufti was compelled to agree, finally laid down the authority of the military commanders and divided up the different spheres of operations in the war to frustrate the implementation of the Partition plan. The Damascus talks did more than curtail the Mufti's military powers to appointing a military commander for the Jerusalem district only; his political powers were also restricted, and he had to agree to postponing the establishment of a Palestine Government-in-Exile. In this connection Syria played a leading role. It was Shukri al-Quwatli the Syrian President, who expressed the view that military and political affairs should be separated—a view that the Mufti has always rejected. Apparently it was hinted to the Mufti already in Damascus that he would not be allowed to rule as an autocrat in the Palestine Arab State. This accounts for his promise of a democratic paradise "after the country has been rescued from the Zionists". He stated that the Arabs would be free to set up a government of their own choice. Following this setback, the Mufti thought of going to Cairo with a large entourage including official opposition representatives on the Arab Higher Executive. These, however, refused to fall in with his suggestion. It now appears that Dr. Khalidi has previously sent a letter to the participants in the Damascus talks (but not to the Mufti and his supporters) and to the Arab League, in which he presumably described the peculiar situation obtaining in Palestine and gave an account of the differences prevailing among the A.H.E. The absence of representatives from Jerusalem at the Cairo meeting was a further blow to the prestige of the Mufti and the A.H.E. among the Arab World."

2. A.H.E. Thrust Aside.

*Arab Higher Executive*  
"The A.H.E. is no longer the decisive factor in the struggle that is now taking place in Palestine. The Arab League's Military Committee is now in charge of operations and controls most of the funds earmarked by the Arab States for the prosecution of the war in Palestine. As a result, the A.H.E.'s position has been weakened, both inside and outside Palestine. This body's concern for its prestige in the eyes of the Arab League is shown by its appeal to the local National Committees not to refer direct to the Arab States or the League. It is strongly urging that it should not be bypassed, only a very small proportion of the funds that are streaming in from outside Palestine reach the A.H.E., and they are not sufficient for it to maintain its ordinary functions. The A.H.E. now has a deficit. There is

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with regard to expenditure, and it owes salaries to its staff. It can neither meet its commitments nor help the victims of the disorders. The A.H.E. in Jerusalem has recently sent a strongly-worded complaint to the H.N.T. with regard to the financial situation."

*arg. Higher Expenditure*  
"Relations among members of the A.H.E. are also unsatisfactory. Following the defeat in Damascus, Dr. Khalidi and Ahmad Fikri refused to go to Cairo to attend the meetings of the League and A.H.E. It is reported that Dr. Khalidi is about to have a meeting with King Abdullah. Relations between Dr. Khalidi, secretary of the A.H.E., and Jamil al-Husseini, the vice-chairman, have become critical, and apparently the two can no longer work together. It will come as no surprise if the A.H.E. is expanded in the near future."

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55-7-14-40